GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4799
ANSWERED ON:09.05.2007
BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS
Sugavanam Shri E.G.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has taken any steps to convert even the ordinary passports into bio-metric ones;

(b) if so, the details alongwith the features thereof;

(c) the amount likely to be spent for converting the same; and

(d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to bring more transparency in the Regional Passport Offices?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) & (b) Yes. The Government have decided to introduce e-passports, also known as bio- metric passports, initially for diplomats and officials as a pilot project by the end of 2007. Based on the experience gained from this pilot project, it is proposed to start issuance of e-passports in the ordinary category by the end of 2008. A Technical Committee has been constituted to finalise the technical specifications of the e-passports and this matter is under examination.

(c) The cost of converting ordinary into bio-metric passports will be worked out on the basis of the technical specifications that are finalised.

(d) The Government have been continually taking a number of steps to bring about more transparency in Passport Offices. These include computerisation of all Passport Offices, introduction of on-line registration, tele-enquiry, passport adalats, strengthening of grievance redressal mechanism, etc. The National Institute of Smart Government (NISG), Hyderabad has prepared a comprehensive study on passport issuance system. The implementation of this report will, inter alia, enhance further transparency in the functioning of Passport Offices.